



## **Post-Adoption Services/Adoption Assistance Benefits Handout**

Adoption represents an ongoing commitment for adoptive parent(s) and their adopted child(ren). After a child has been placed into an adoptive family, the family may have questions, concerns, and/or a need for supportive services. The Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS)/Social Services Administration Unit (SSAU) has established Post-Adoption Services to assist adoptive families in meeting their needs and the needs of their adoptive child(ren). These services are designed to enhance the adoption experience and to prevent disruption or dissolution of the adoptive placement.

Some post-adoption services are available only for families who have adopted children through Georgia's Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS). However, there are some supportive services, including the Georgia Center for Resources & Support, which are available to all adoptive families residing in Georgia.

The availability and amount of Post Adoption Services are subject to State and Federal laws, regulations, and budgetary requirements. Below is a list of Post Adoption Services, along with brief descriptions:

### **Post-Adoption Services Currently Available Through the Social Services Administration Unit:**

- Adoption Assistance
- Non-recurring Only Adoption Assistance
- Respite for Medically Fragile Adoptive Children
- Georgia Adoption Reunion Registry
- Adopted Teen Empowerment and Mentoring Program (ATEAM)
- Crisis Intervention Team
- Georgia Center for Resources & Support
- State of Georgia/Department of Family and Children Services Website-Adoptions
- Georgia State Adoption Tax Credit
- Federal Adoption Tax Credit

For more information, contact the County Department of Family and Children Services Adoption Assistance Case Manager. Each of these post-adoption services is described in more detail below:

### **Adoption Assistance**

Adoption Assistance includes monthly financial assistance, medical assistance (Medicaid), and non-recurring one-time funds for legal expenses related to finalizing an adoption. Adoption Assistance is available for families adopting eligible children who meet Federal and State criteria for Special Needs, as well as other eligibility criteria, as determined by the Social Services Administration Unit and the Revenue Maximization Unit. An Adoption Assistance Agreement must be signed prior to finalization. Ongoing Adoption Assistance is available up to age 18 if the adoptive family remains legally and financially responsible for the adopted child.

### **Non-recurring Only Adoption Assistance**

One-time funds up to \$1500.00 per child per adoption are available to go toward expenses related to the finalization of an adoption (legal, pre-placement visit cost & physicals for adoptive parents), and are payable only after the finalization of a child who meets Special Needs Criteria. A Special Needs Determination must be made and an Agreement must be signed prior to finalization.

### **Respite for Medically Fragile Adoptive Children**

Children who are receiving ongoing Adoption Assistance and who were adopted while in the permanent custody of DFCS or who were placed from DFCS custody into the permanent custody of a specified individual for the purpose of adoption are potentially eligible for this form of Respite. This respite is approved by the SSAU and the approval period may not last longer than one year from the date of approval. Please Note: The provision of Respite for Medically Fragile Adoptive Children is dependent upon the availability of State funds and is not available after a child turns age 18.

- Respite funds may be available for families where the adoptive child is documented to meet the Medically Fragile criteria by a licensed Medical Provider. ***The child must meet one of the Medically Fragile criteria listed below:***
  1. A condition that requires dependence upon durable medical equipment (to include, but not limited to, wheelchairs, walkers, etc...)
  2. A condition that requires dependence upon medical support equipment (to include, but not limited to, a respirator, feeding pump, suction machine, oxygen, etc...)
  3. A life-threatening, acute/chronic infectious disease, acute/chronic noninfectious disease requiring respiratory or other precautions (excluding normal childhood diseases)
  4. A terminal illness
  5. A condition that requires ongoing administration of intravenous medication or a feeding tube for nutritional support (G tube, etc.)
  6. A condition that requires intensive rehabilitation and/or developmental disability services.
- Respite is available up to 5 hours per month per family at the rate of \$6.00 per hour for the first child and \$2.00 per hour for each sibling.

- Prior to finalization of an adoption, Respite Providers must meet the background standards of a Supplemental Supervision provider.
- Respite hours may not be accumulated from month to month or borrowed from future months.
- Approval of funds cannot be made for services that have already been provided.

### **Georgia Adoption Reunion Registry**

Adoptees, birthparents, or siblings who have been permanently separated through adoption often reach a time in their lives when they want more information about their biological family. This “need to know” may be due to medical, genetic, genealogical, or personal reasons.

The Georgia Adoption Reunion Registry provides the following services:

- Assistance to an adult adoptee in order to establish contact with the adoptee’s biological parents with the expressed consent of the biological parent(s).
- Assistance to adult siblings in establishing contact with each other (provided at least one of them is an adoptee) with the expressed consent of the sibling who is being sought.
- Provides an adult adoptee or adoptive parents of an adoptee under age 18 with non-identifying information from the sealed adoption record without having to obtain a court order.
- Assistance to biological parents in registering their consent to contact /release birth family identifying information or to register their desire not to have contact and preventing the release of birth family identifying information from the sealed adoption record.
- Assistance to siblings in registering their consent to have contact or to register their desire not to have contact with the searcher

For more information, call the Georgia Adoption Reunion Registry at 1-888-328-0055 or visit their website at [www.ga-adoptionreunion.com](http://www.ga-adoptionreunion.com).

### **Adopted Teen Empowerment and Mentoring Program (ATEAM)**

The Adopted Teen Empowerment & Mentoring Program (ATEAM) is designed for adopted teens in 6<sup>th</sup> through 12th grades. ATEAM provides participants with an opportunity for mutual support and self-expression through group interactions with other adopted teens. This group consists of teens and mentors who meet monthly at host sites in each region across the state. Meeting times are generally from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. one Saturday per month, with two weekend retreats planned each year. Parent transportation is required. Parent training/support groups are offered, as well. Pre-registration is required for the program, as each site is limited to 30 youth participants. ATEAM also provides an annual adoptive family and youth training seminar.

Eligible teens are youth receiving adoption assistance who had been in the custody of a state agency. This program may not be well suited for teens who experience

difficulties interacting within a large group setting. Please contact the ATEAM Program Administrator for more information about ATEAM, including local activities and contact numbers for each region of the state. Below is the contact information:

ATEAM Program Administrator  
Family Matters Consulting, Inc.  
Chris Greer  
Telephone: 770.965.9336  
Fax: 770-818-5815  
E-mail: [C\\_greer@bellsouth.net](mailto:C_greer@bellsouth.net)

### **Crisis Intervention Team**

The Crisis Intervention Team provides services to adoptive families in need of professional help to improve overall family functioning, preserve the family unit, and provide links to community resources. The team assists adoptive families of special needs children who have been placed in the home and approved for Adoption Assistance benefits.

When a parenting challenge becomes a serious problem, the Crisis Intervention Team can provide early intervention services designed to prevent disruptions, dissolutions and to preserve the family unit. The program consists of Mobile Intervention Teams, including a Team Leader and an Intervention Specialist, who provide in-home family assessments and counseling to families on a statewide basis. All Team members understand the dynamics of the adoption process as well as the unique problems of attachment, trauma and loss which are common in children with multiple placements. They are trained in the prevention of aggressive behaviors, the de-escalation of crisis situations and the development of therapeutic intervention plans to address interpersonal relationships, school performance and physical/emotional health issues.

While the Intervention Team is not designed to replace medical or therapeutic care, it does help the child and family identify and resolve problematic issues. Contact with the Team is for a limited time only (60-90 days). When Intervention services are discontinued, families are then referred to community resources coordinated by the Intervention Team.

In order to be considered for Crisis Intervention Services, the County Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) must refer the family's application to the Social Services Administration Unit for review.

To learn more about this service and apply, the adoptive family should first contact its County DFCS Adoption or Adoption Assistance Case Manager. If unable to contact the County DFCS Case Manager, the family may contact Adrian J. Owens, Program Consultant, Social Services Administration Unit at (404) 657-3558.

To find out more about this service, the adoptive family may visit the Georgia Mentor web site at <http://www.qa-mentor.com> or call Georgia Mentor at 478-785-0005.

### **Georgia Center for Resources & Support**

The Georgia Center for Resources & Support is available to assist families in locating needed resources, developing support groups, providing a “buddy” who has an adopted or foster child with similar special needs, or finding books and publications related to adoption issues. Adoptive families can also benefit from the Center’s website, which contains current information about community resources and which provides interactive training opportunities. Regional Resource Advisors are also available throughout the State of Georgia to assist adoptive families by providing advice, support, and training. The website is found at [www.gacrs.org](http://www.gacrs.org), and the statewide phone number is 1-866-272-7368.

### **State of Georgia/Department of Family and Children Services Website - Adoptions**

This website is found at [www.adoptions.dhr.state.ga.us](http://www.adoptions.dhr.state.ga.us) and contains a photo-listing of children available for adoption, information on upcoming events related to adoption, educational information, description of adoption services, and links to other adoption-related sites.

### **Georgia State Adoption Tax Credit**

The State of Georgia offers a Tax Credit of \$2000 to parents for the adoption of a qualified foster child. A qualified child is defined as a child who is under 18 years of age, and is in a foster home or otherwise in the foster care system under the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS). This credit will be available beginning the tax year the adoption becomes final and ending with the year the child turns age 18. Adoptive parents should consult with their tax professional before filing. For more information, please visit the website for the Georgia Department of Revenue at: <https://etax.dor.ga.gov/>. GA Form IND-CR (rev. 1/10) is used for claiming this tax credit in Georgia and is found at the following link:

[https://etax.dor.ga.gov/inctax/2009 forms/TSD Individual Income Tax Credit INDCR-2009- Fillable.pdf](https://etax.dor.ga.gov/inctax/2009%20forms/TSD%20Individual%20Income%20Tax%20Credit%20INDCR-2009-Fillable.pdf)

### **Federal Adoption Tax Credit**

The Federal Adoption Tax Credit is available to families who meet eligibility requirements, which include the adoption of a Special Needs Child from Foster Care.

Adoptive families interested in finding out more information about the Federal Adoption Tax Credit should consult with their tax professional before filing taxes. Families may also go to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) website listed below, which has information about the Federal Adoption Tax Credit.

<http://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc607.html>

The North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) has information regarding the Federal Adoption Tax Credit in their website, which is listed below:

<http://www.nacac.org/postadopt/taxcredit.html>